

The State of Public Education in New Orleans 2022-2023

February 2023



Cowen Institute
TULANE UNIVERSITY

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Introduction

01

The Cowen Institute last published our flagship report, *The State of Public Education in New Orleans*, in March 2020, right as the first tremors of what would become the Covid-19 pandemic were being felt in New Orleans and in communities around the world. Since then, schools, educators, parents, and students, here in New Orleans, as well as across the nation, have navigated and adapted to an unprecedented landscape of school closures and reopenings, masking, virtual learning, and other measures, while also trying to continue their educational journeys.

Fortunately, with the availability of vaccines for all students, teachers, and school staff, it appears that the most arduous aspects of the pandemic have abated. Schools opened in 2022-2023 with in-person learning and hopefully this year continues a return to routine and normalcy in a way that hasn't been felt since early 2020.

Since 2007, the Cowen Institute has published this report on an annual basis. We made a decision to not publish for the last two years due to a number of factors. First, in almost all cases, both here in Louisiana and nationally, school assessment measures were paused over the past two years. This meant that while students often still took end-of-year tests to assess their academic progress, schools were not evaluated or graded on student performance as they had been in the past. Furthermore, the ever-shifting nature of public education during the pandemic meant that a report would likely be outdated soon after publication. Instead, we published a series of interviews with educators on their response to the pandemic. We also continued our annual polling that examines how parents and guardians feel about education in the city, including their opinions on how schools and the district responded to the pandemic.

2022-2023 has marked a return to a more familiar school environment. We are excited to also release this report that works to capture some of the changes, accomplishments,

setbacks, and gains that have occurred in public education in New Orleans since the start of the pandemic.

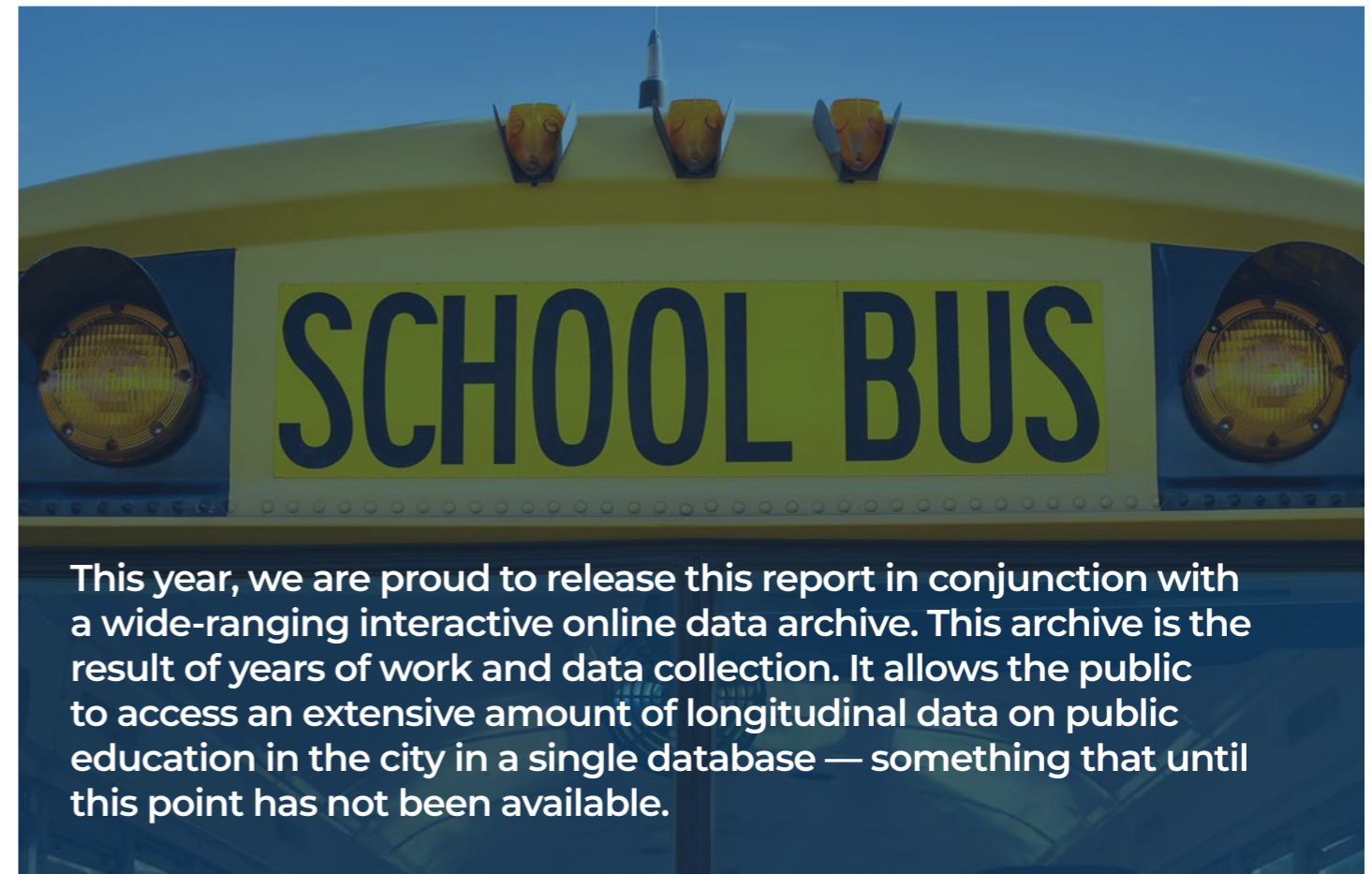
The State of Public Education in New Orleans (SPENO) report has evolved significantly since the Cowen Institute first published it in 2007. Initially, SPENO chronicled the dramatic changes to New Orleans' public education following Hurricane Katrina, including the transition to a system dominated by charter schools, along with a focus on comparing governance and academic performance to the pre-reform years. Over time, we have begun to incorporate a greater amount of public data into the report, and shift our focus as much as possible to include insights into postsecondary outcomes for students.

Like every prior edition, though, this is a snapshot of public education in the current academic year using aggregated data from publicly available sources to inform a wide audience that includes educators, families, and students, as well as policymakers and the general public. Unlike previous years, we were unable to include information on teacher demographics and transportation as there is not updated aggregated data available from the Louisiana Department of Education on these topics. This report is not intended to provide in-depth analysis on every aspect of public education in New Orleans. This decision is intentional. In truth, to provide adequate, nuanced, and detailed framing for a variety of issues, from enrollment to school performance to transportation, would require a lengthy study and additional data. That level of context, framing, and detail is beyond the scope of the current report. Rather, we believe that there is value in summarizing data on New Orleans education from publicly available sources and putting that together in a unified report. Doing so on a regular basis allows us to track high-level descriptive information over time and serves as an archival piece in an ever-changing landscape. It does not, however, always provide the space for a deeper exploration of the data.

As always, we rely on extensive external feedback from governmental and education officials, state entities, educators, non-profit organizations, community members, and researchers to inform the report. This helps us to ensure the accuracy of our work and data, particularly in a system that is marked by frequent change. It also allows stakeholders to weigh in on our framing. In doing so, we are reminded there is more than one way to tell a story, particularly one as complicated, divisive, and emotionally charged as New Orleans public education in the 21st century.

In some cases, we provide data from previous years to track changes over time. We do not, however, provide in-

depth contextual framing in the current report. As such, we acknowledge that SPENO does not tell the full story of public education in our city. There are tens of thousands of families with children attending public school in our city and there are thousands of people in schools, districts, and community organizations working to improve public education in New Orleans everyday. We know that each person has their own opinion about the state of public education in New Orleans. We know that their experiences often vary greatly. We hope this report can be used as a jumping-off point to a deeper exploration of these extremely nuanced subject areas and a resource for open and informed discussions among stakeholders.



This year, we are proud to release this report in conjunction with a wide-ranging interactive online data archive. This archive is the result of years of work and data collection. It allows the public to access an extensive amount of longitudinal data on public education in the city in a single database — something that until this point has not been available.

Data archive

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This archive covers information on public education in New Orleans since 2004 and includes data on:

- All schools that have operated in the city since 2004, by year
- The geographic location of schools, by year
- School closures and turnarounds
- School name changes
- School mergers
- School transitions
- Governance changes
- School-level demographics over time

You can access the archive at:

<https://cowendata.org>

Current Events

02

A great deal has changed in New Orleans since we last published SPENO in March 2020. Most obviously, the city, along with the rest of the world, grappled with the staggering impacts of Covid-19 and remote learning. As we documented¹ in a series of posts published during the pandemic, NOLA-PS, CMOs, individual schools, and education leaders in New Orleans responded with extensive public outreach and distribution of resources to families across the city. This included providing meals for students and families, establishing Covid testing centers, providing expanded mental health services, and working with students to enhance virtual learning, amongst other initiatives. These efforts were acknowledged and generally appreciated by the public — our November 2021² poll that surveyed more than 1,000 New Orleans parents of K-12 students found strong support for the way both schools and the district responded to the pandemic. Notably, 67% of parents categorized the response of schools to the pandemic as excellent or good, while 52% did so for the district, compared to just 5% and 7% who categorized the responses as poor, respectively.

While the pandemic is not completely behind the city or the nation, schools have returned to full in-person learning. This section covers some of the more noteworthy developments outside Covid that have occurred since 2020.

A new NOLA-PS Superintendent

A significant change to public education in the city over the past two years has been to NOLA-PS district leadership: in April 2022, the Orleans Parish School Board (OPSB) formally approved Dr. Avis Williams³ as the district's new superintendent. Dr. Williams assumed office officially in July 2022⁴. She took over for Dr. Henderson Lewis, who had led the district since 2015, helping to guide the city's schools through the pandemic.

Dr. Williams is the first female to serve as the permanent superintendent in the district's 181-year history⁵. Prior to coming to New Orleans, Williams was the superintendent of Selma City Schools in Selma, Alabama for five years. She also served as deputy superintendent of schools in Tuscaloosa, Alabama.

Since taking office, Dr. Williams has embarked on an extensive listening tour with education stakeholders across the city. Her plan for her first 100 days⁶ in office included focuses on mental health awareness, evaluating schools through an equity-focus, and increasing community engagement. Dr. Williams signed a four-year contract that included explicit goals, such as:

- Guiding and establishing the district's long-term vision and strategy to meet the educational needs of all NOLA-PS students.
- Ensuring continued academic performance growth among all NOLA-PS charter and direct-run schools.
- Maintaining the set of comprehensive and rigorous accountability standards for new and existing charter schools under NOLA-PS governance.

Her contract also includes performance-based objectives in the areas of facilities, finance, accountability, and truancy.

Additionally, the district is currently exploring how to incorporate parental and student feedback, as well as non-academic metrics into its accountability framework so that school letter grades better reflect all of the priorities of students, parents, and families.

Leadership change at the state level

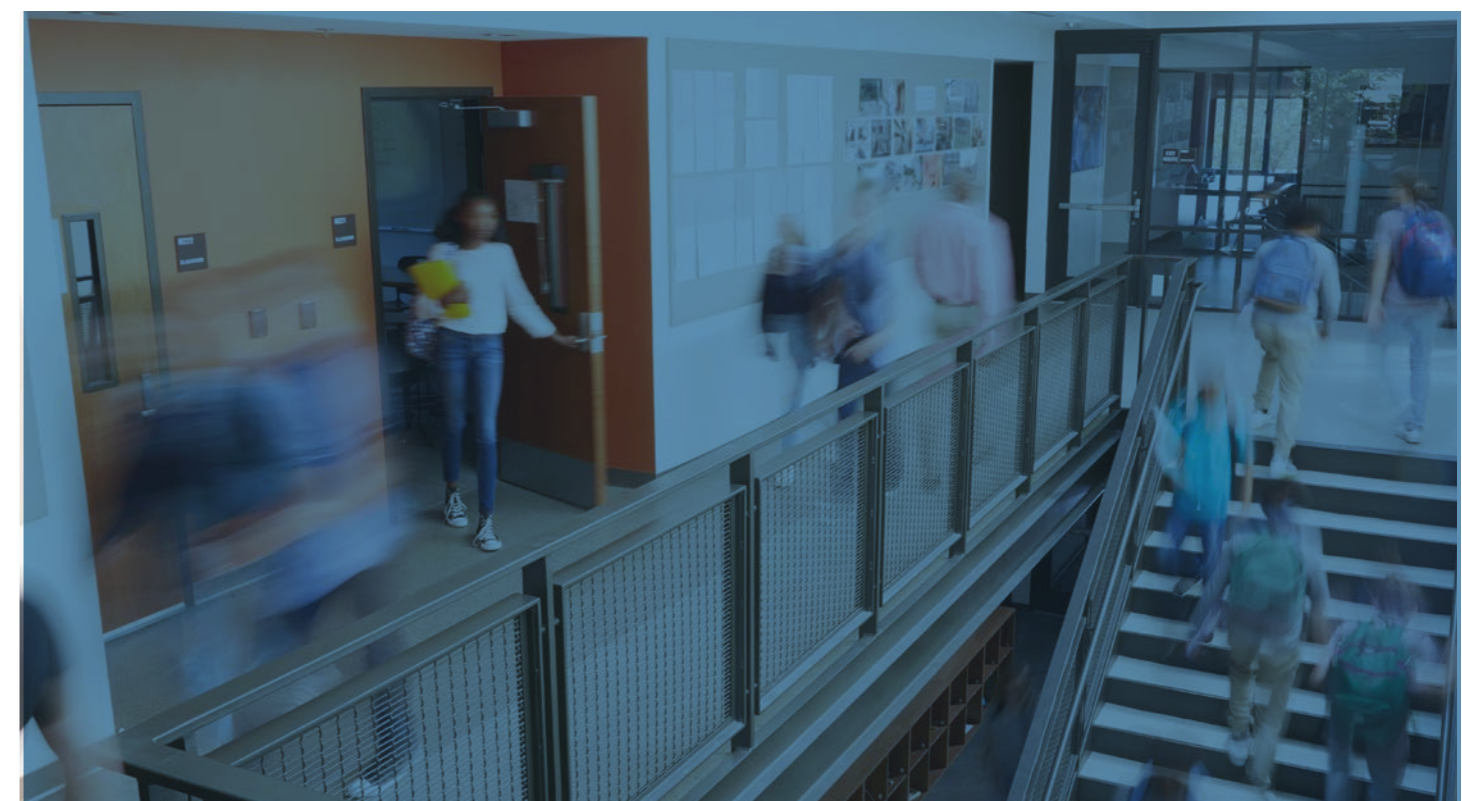
NOLA-PS wasn't the only public education entity in the state to experience a major leadership change during the pandemic: the Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE), which oversees all public schools in the state, also went through a transition. Dr. Cade Brumley became the Louisiana State Superintendent of Education in May 2020. He took over from John White, who served in the role from 2012-2020. Since taking office, Dr. Brumley has focused on recovery efforts from both Covid-19 and the numerous hurricanes that impacted the state over the past two years. Prior to becoming State Superintendent, Dr. Brumley served as Superintendent of Jefferson Parish Schools.

Facility and school name changes

Beginning in 2020, the OPSB Board engaged in an extensive renaming process for school facilities in the city. The process mainly focused on changing the names⁷ of schools facilities that had been named after confederate leaders, slave owners, or segregation supporters. The process also included restoring the names of some historic facilities. In 2021, the Board approved more than 20 schools and facilities to have name changes.

Early childhood education funding

In the United States, funding for early childhood education is generally not a part of the funding municipalities, states, and the federal government provide for K-12 education. As a result, in many places, including Louisiana in general, and New Orleans specifically, early childhood learning has historically been chronically underfunded. In April 2022, New Orleans voters approved a ballot measure⁸ that will provide additional funding for early childhood in the city. The new tax is estimated to bring in more than \$21 million annually, which should help increase the number of early childhood education seats funded by city revenues from 200 to 1,000.



NEW ORLEANS PUBLIC SCHOOLS 2022 - 2023 GOVERNANCE CHART

New Orleans Public Schools (NOLA-PS): 72 Schools

Algiers Charter School Association	Crescent City Schools	InspireNOLA	New Orleans College Prep
L.B. Landry High School 9-12	Akili Academy of New Orleans PK4-8	Alice M. Harte Charter School PK4-8	Walter L. Cohen College Prep 9-12
Martin Behrman Charter School Academy of Creative Arts and Sciences PK4-8	Harriet Tubman Charter School PK4-8	Andrew H. Wilson Charter School PK4-8	ReNEW
Advocates for Academic Excellence in Education	Dorothy Height Charter School PK4-8	Dwight D. Eisenhower Charter School PK4-8	ReNEW Dolores T. Aaron Academy PK4-8
Benjamin Franklin High School at the Katherine C. Johnson Campus 9-12	Educators for Quality Alternatives	Edna Karr High School 9-12	ReNEW Laurel Elementary PK4-8
Advocates for Arts-Based Education	The NET Charter High School: Central City (Alternative School) 8-12	Eleanor McMain Secondary School 9-12	ReNEW Schaumburg Elementary PK4-8
The Willow School K-12	The NET Charter High School: East (Alternative School) 8-12	McDonogh 35 Senior High School 9-12	Rooted School
Advocates for Innovative Schools	The NET Charter High School: Gentry (Alternative School) 8-12	McDonogh 42 Elementary Charter School PK4-8	Rooted School 9-12
Robert Russo Moton Charter School PK4-8	Élan Academy	Pierre A. Capdou at Avery Alexander Charter School PK4-8	Significant Educators, Inc.
Advocates for Science & Mathematics Education	Élan Academy PK4-7	Institute for Academic Excellence	Mary McLeod Bethune Elementary Charter School PK4-8
New Orleans Charter Science and Math High School 9-12	Encore Academy	Sophie B. Wright High School 9-12	Success Preparatory Academy
ARISE	Encore Academy PK4-8	KIPP New Orleans	Success at Thurgood Marshall PK4-8
Mildred Osborne Charter School K-8	FirstLine Schools	KIPP Believe K-8	The Citizens' Committee for Education
Bricolage Academy	Arthur Ashe Charter School K-8	Booker T. Washington High School 9-12	Homer A. Plessey Community School PK4-8
Bricolage Academy PK4-8	Langston Hughes Academy PK4-8	Frederick A. Douglass High School 9-12	The Council for Quality Education
Collegiate Academies	Phillis Wheatley Community School PK4-8	John F. Kennedy High School 9-12	Lake Forest Elementary Charter School K-8
Abramson Sci Academy 9-12	Samuel J. Green Charter School PK4-8	KIPP Central City PK4-8	The Einstein Group
G.W. Carver High School 9-12	French and Montessori	KIPP East PK4-8	Einstein Charter Middle School at Sarah Towles Reed 7-8
Livingston Collegiate Academy 9-12	Audubon Charter School: Gentry PK4-8	KIPP Leadership PK4-8	Einstein Charter School at Sherwood Forest PK4-6
Opportunities Academy 11-12	Audubon Charter School PK4-8	KIPP Marial PK4-8	Einstein Charter School at Village de l'Est PK4-6
Rosenwald Collegiate Academy 9-12	Friends of King	Legacy of Excellence, Inc.	Sarah Towles Reed High School 9-12
Community Academies of New Orleans	Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Charter School at the Alfred Lawless Campus PK4-12	Benjamin Franklin Elementary Mathematics and Science School PK4-8	Warren Easton Charter High School Foundation
Esperanza Charter School K-8	Hynes Charter School Corporation	Living School Charter	Warren Easton High School 9-12
Foundation Preparatory Charter School K-8	Edwards Hynes Charter School - Lakewood PK3-8	Living School 9-12	Young Audiences Charter Schools
Lafayette Academy Charter School PK4-8	Edwards Hynes Charter School - Parkview K-8	Lyceum Schools, Inc.	Young Audiences Charter School at Lawrence D. Crocker PK4-8
Community Leaders Advocating Student Success, Inc.	Edwards Hynes Charter School - UNO K-3	Delores Taylor Arthur School for Young Men 8-10	NOLA-PS Contract Schools
Fannie C. Williams Charter School PK4-8		Morris Jeff Community School PK4-12	Travis Hill School 6-12

BESE Schools: 6 Schools

International High School of New Orleans 9-12	New Harmony High 9-12
International School of Louisiana K-8	New Orleans Military and Maritime Academy 8-12
Lycee Francois de la Nouvelle-Orleans PK4-12	Noble Minds Institute for Whole Child Learning K-7

State Legislature: 1 School

New Orleans Center for Creative Arts 9-12
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Changes for 2022 - 2023

- Name Changes**
- Benjamin Franklin High School (added at the Katherine C. Johnson Campus)
 - Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Charter School (added at the Alfred Lawless Campus)
 - Dorothy Height Charter School (Formerly Paul Habane)
 - ReNEW Laurel Elementary (Formerly ReNEW Laurel SciTech)
 - The Willow School (Formerly Lusher)
- School Closures**
- ARISE Academy (ARISE)
 - James M. Singleton Charter School (Dryades YMCA)
 - Line Oak Academy (FirstLine Schools)
 - Oscar Dunn (IDEA Public Schools New Orleans)

Note: There are five independently operated schools under the NOLA-PS LEA – Benjamin Franklin Mathematics and Science School, Delores T. Arthur School for Young Men, Élan Academy, Mary McLeod Bethune Elementary School of Literature and Technology, & Travis Hill School.

Governance



What is school governance?

Governance is a crucial and often contentious issue in the decentralized landscape of New Orleans public education. The term school governance refers to which entity oversees and holds schools accountable. Since the major changes to New Orleans public education that occurred in 2005, governance has assumed a central role in the city.

New Orleans' public education is unique compared to the rest of the U.S. in that almost all schools in the city are charter schools run by Charter Management Organizations (CMOs) that oversee the operations, hiring, and administration of the schools. The local district, New Orleans Public Schools (NOLA-PS), oversees these CMOs and can authorize new schools to open or close failing schools, but they are not involved in the day-to-day running of schools (for instance, they do not hire or fire teachers or principals, or handle in-school budgets). By contrast, in most districts in the U.S., the central district does directly run the schools and has control over issues like hiring and administration that CMOs manage on their own in New Orleans. In New Orleans, it can be argued that the governing entity of a school matters less than the charter operator, as the charter operator has more control over the day-to-day decisions of schools. Additionally, each CMO also has its own board which is tasked with holding school leaders accountable. These charter boards are responsible for:

- Ensuring the financial good standing of the school;
- Assessing the performance of school and CMO leadership;
- Confirming the school is meeting the requirements of its charter.

For the 2022-2023 school year, there are a total of 79 public schools in the city, of which, 72 are overseen by NOLA-PS. Of the schools under NOLA-PS, there are five independently operated schools within the NOLA-PS LEA – Benjamin Franklin Mathematics and Science School, Delores T. Arthur School for Young Men, Élan

Academy, Mary McLeod Bethune Elementary School of Literature and Technology, & Travis Hill School. The rest of the schools governed by NOLA-PS are operated by independent CMOs.

Additionally, there are six charter schools located in the city overseen by the Louisiana State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) and one school governed by the Louisiana State Legislature. Students from anywhere in Louisiana can attend BESE schools, whereas students attending NOLA-PS schools must live in Orleans Parish. There are no for-profit charter schools in the city.

The chart on the adjoining page illustrates the governance structure of New Orleans' 79 schools, highlighting both the entity that is responsible for overseeing the schools (NOLA-PS, BESE, or the State Legislature), as well as the CMO that runs each school.

What is governance like in New Orleans?

Governance plays an especially important role in New Orleans' public education. The governing body of a school, whether NOLA-PS, BESE, or the State Legislature, holds schools and CMOs accountable, from both an academic and a financial performance perspective, and decides which charter schools can open and operate.

A charter school takes its name from the fact that the leaders of a school sign a contract, or charter, with a governing entity that delineates the terms that school must follow and the benchmarks it must meet in order to stay open. If a school does not meet the requirements established in its charter contract, the governing entity can impose new guidelines or shut the school down completely if standards are not met for an extended number of years.

Last year, NOLA-PS did not authorize any new schools to open in the city (though three schools changed names), while it closed four schools.

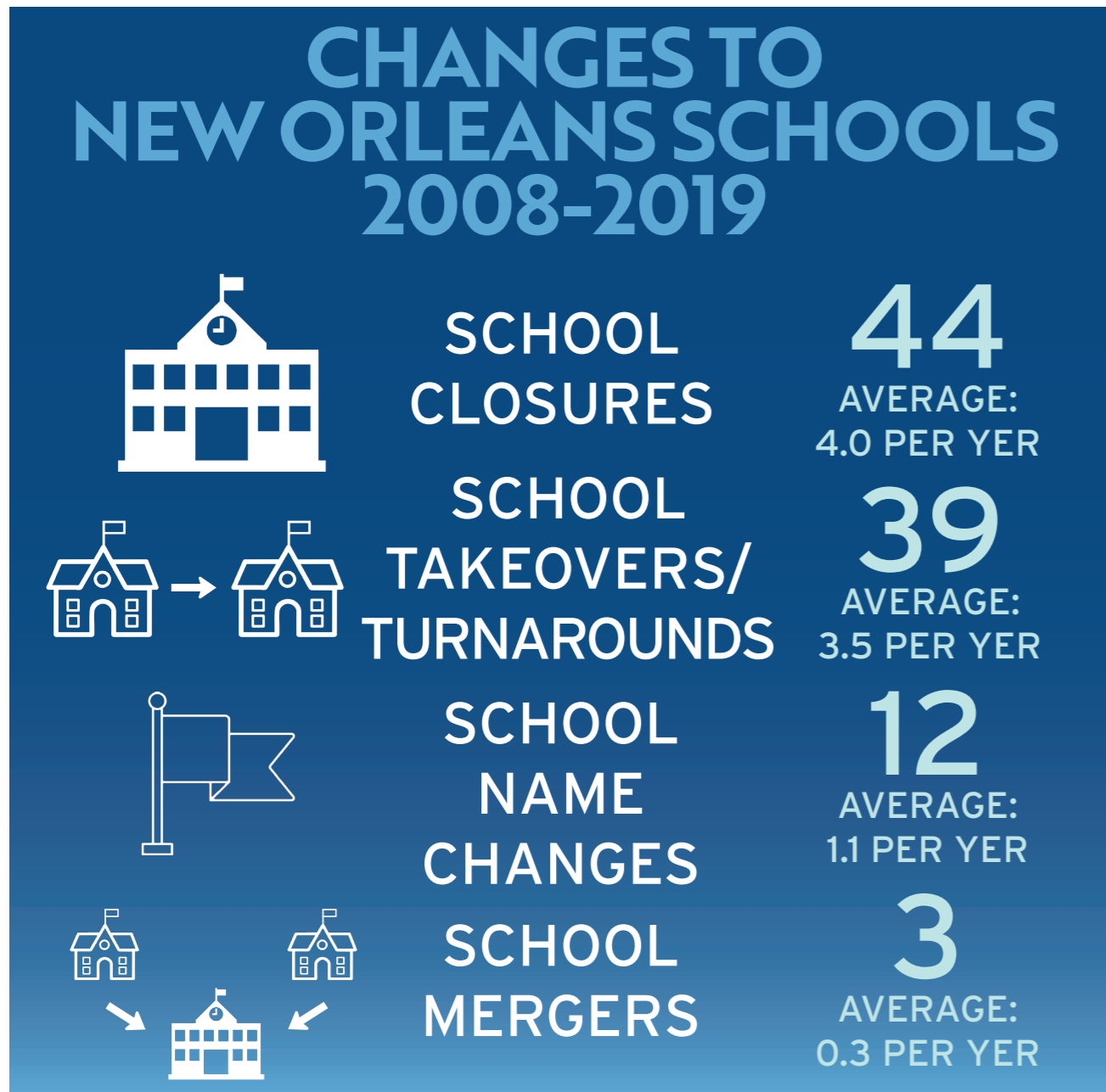
Understanding governance in New Orleans' schools is far more complicated than in most other U.S. cities. Families and stakeholders in New Orleans might engage with any of three layers of oversight — the charter board, the authorizing entity (NOLA-PS, BESE, or the Legislature), or the Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE).

How has governance changed over time?

The evolution of New Orleans' governance to this unique system began in 2005 due to the state's takeover of most city schools. Following that takeover, governance of the city's public charter schools was split between the state-run RSD and the OPSB (Orleans Parish School Board, now NOLA-PS) for most of the past 15 years. In 2018, that changed, when state law required all formerly RSD schools in the city to come under NOLA-PS governance. That has led to the current state of public education in the city, in which all public schools are charter schools run by non-profit organizations.

This unique governance structure has led to constant change in the public education landscape in the city. To get a deeper sense of the extent of these changes, the Cowen Institute has put together an interactive online archive that tracks all school closures, takeovers/turnarounds (when a CMO takes over the operations of a school from another CMO), name changes, mergers, and grade level changes since the 2004-2005 school year. Using that data, the following infographic highlights school changes from 2008-2019 (school closures from 2004-2008 are not included in this review due to the fact that so many schools closed in the wake of Hurricane Katrina).

These numbers illustrate how frequent change has been to the governance of New Orleans public education over the past decade. This state of consistent transformation does place a burden on parents and educators as they try to navigate the system and remain aware of what has changed from one year to the next.



Enrollment

04

Enrollment demographics

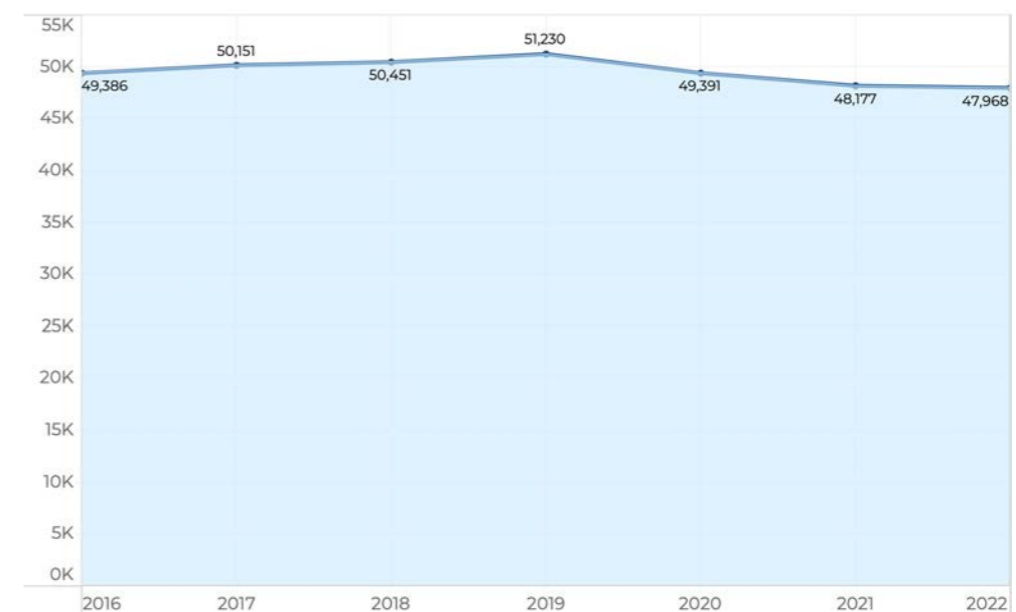
As of October 2022, there were 47,968 PreK-12 students enrolled in public schools in New Orleans, including NOLA-PS schools and Type 2 charter schools (Type 2 charters are those overseen by BESE). The city's schools serve primarily students of color (90.4%) and/or students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds (86.0%). While the majority of the city's public school students are Black (74.0%), there has been an increase in the number of White and Hispanic students in public schools recently.

Enrollment in New Orleans public schools remains largely segregated along racial and socioeconomic lines. The relatively small percentage of White students in New Orleans public schools are largely concentrated in schools with A or B grades (75% of White students attend an A or B school), which are also often selective admissions schools. Meanwhile, fewer than 5% of White students attend a D or F school. Conversely, almost half of Black and Hispanic students (45% and 46%, respectively) attend C schools, while another 30% of Black students and 20% of Hispanic students attend D/F schools. Less than a quarter (24%) of Black students and roughly one third (33%) of Hispanic students attend A or B schools.

This reality is not new: New Orleans public schools have been segregated along racial and socioeconomic lines for decades. While the past decade has brought some progress in the racial and socioeconomic integration of the city's public schools, it has been a small shift rather than a widespread change. Another factor contributing to school segregation is that the city has a number of high-performing, selective admissions schools. These schools require students to pass an academic test to be eligible for enrollment. They have historically served a disproportionate percentage of White students from higher-income households compared to the overall demographics of the city's public schools and continue to do so today. Based on student demographic data of schools, it is evident that most White students enroll only at the small number of higher-performing public schools in the city. White students that do not attend these schools may choose instead to attend private schools. This could indicate that White parents are opting out of the public school system unless they get into one of their top choices.

Finally, it is estimated that New Orleans has one of the highest private school enrollment rates in the country, with a projected 25% of the city's students enrolled in private schools. A number of the city's more affluent families

PK-12 Public School Enrollment in Orleans Parish Over Time



send their children to private schools, further contributing to the over-representation of students from low-income households in New Orleans' public schools.

Changes to Enrollment

Enrollment in NOLA-PS schools has declined in recent years, from 51,230 in October 2019 to 47,968 in October 2022. Surrounding parishes have also experienced a similar decline in enrollment. While some of the lower enrollment numbers, particularly among kindergarten students, can be attributed to the pandemic and are reflected in national enrollment statistics, declining birth rates and rising housing prices in the city are also contributing factors. The issue is particularly acute in grades K-5. Enrollment in grades K-5 was 22,676 in 2018, and for 2022 is 20,233—a decline of nearly 11%.

Enrollment Procedures

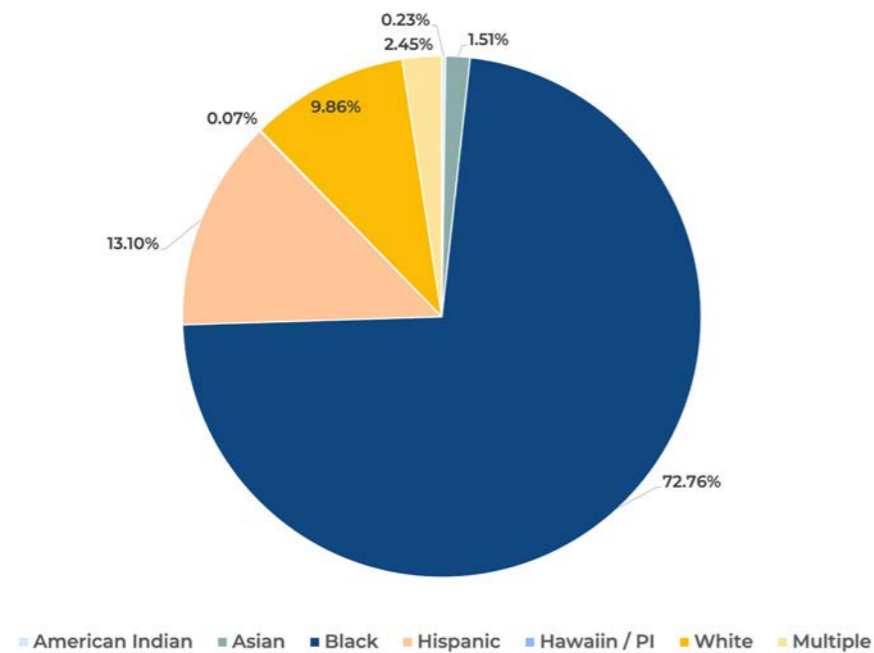
The city has a unique open enrollment system that means that New Orleans students can apply to enroll in any school in the city, regardless of where they live (in most U.S. school districts, families must attend a school based on their place of residence). In New Orleans, families complete an online application in order to apply to most schools. Families can rank up to eight schools for early childcare and twelve for K-12 schools on their application. Families are assigned to a school based on an algorithm that accounts for a number of factors, such as whether a child has a sibling at the school and their proximity to the school.

The 2022-2023 school year saw the introduction of the New Orleans Common Application Process (NCAP), the citywide enrollment system formerly known as OneApp. Due to changes in charter contracts for some selective admissions schools, the NCAP now includes selective admissions schools that were previously unavailable. For the 2022-2023 school year, approximately 9,600 families applied for a seat in a New Orleans Public School, up from approximately 9,200 families in the previous year. Overall, 82% of students matched into one of their top three choices, which is the same percentage as last year. Of students applying for a spot in kindergarten or 9th grade, the two biggest entry points to New Orleans public schools, the match rates were higher — 90% got into one of their top three choices.

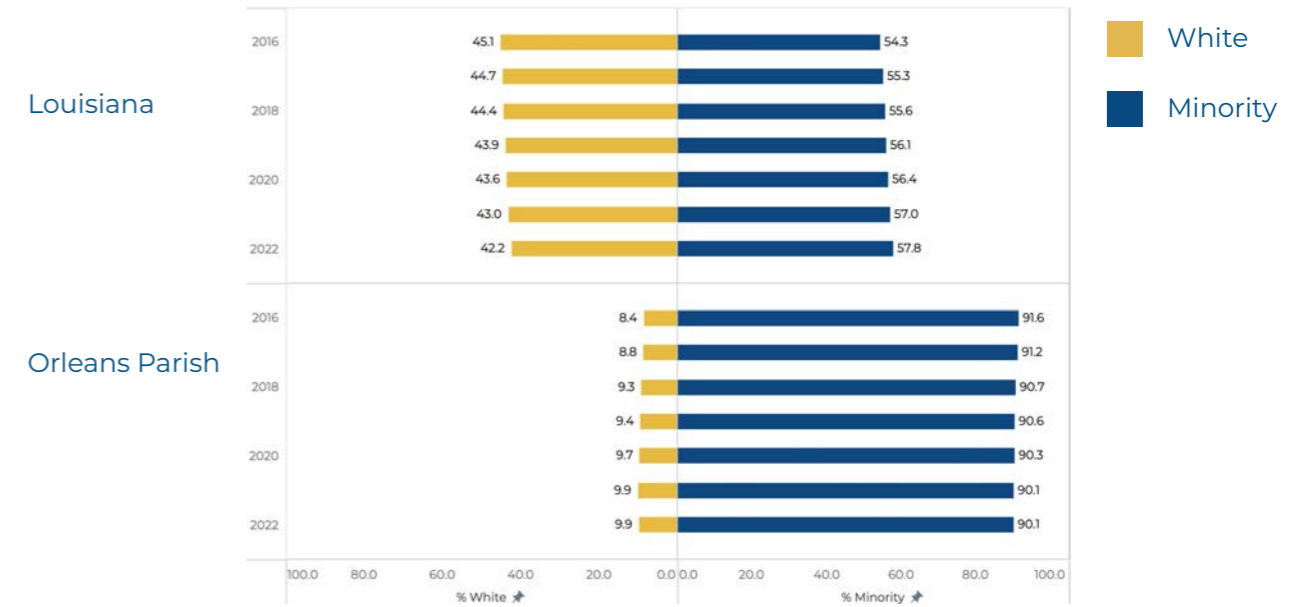
The most in-demand elementary and high schools remain consistent: Hynes Charter School in Lakeview, an A-rated school, saw the most applicants for kindergarten this year, with 628 families seeking entry. The match rate was just 19%. Lusher Charter School (now Willow Charter School) received the second-most kindergarten applicants, followed by Bricolage Academy, Audubon Charter School Montessori, and Audubon Charter School - Gentilly.

For high school, Warren Easton Charter High School, an A-rated school, received the most 9th grade applications, 2,059, and had a match rate of 34%. Edna Karr High School, which also had a match rate of 34%, had the second most applicants for 9th grade, followed by Benjamin Franklin High School, Eleanor McMain Secondary School, and McDonogh 35 Senior High School.

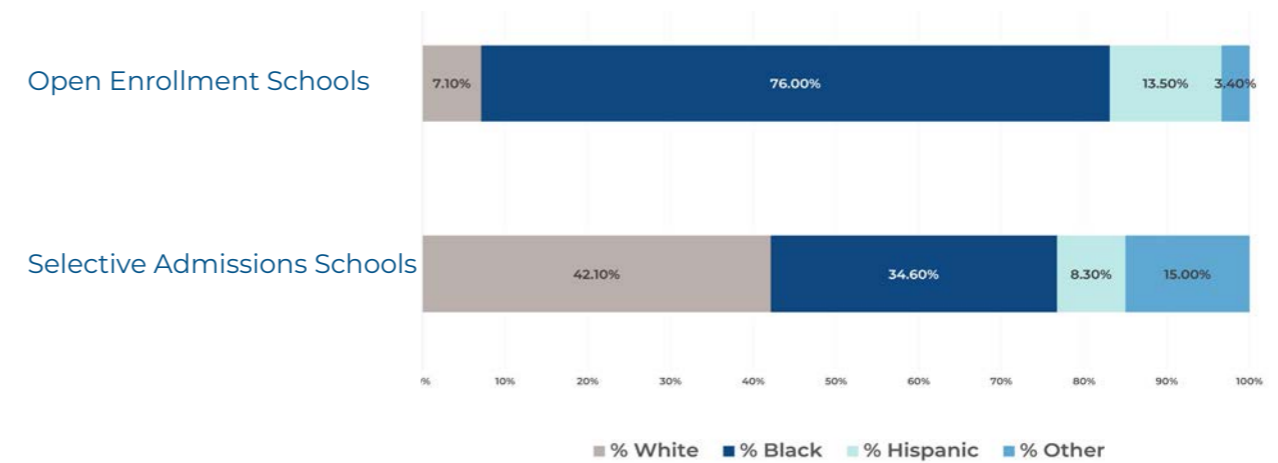
Public School Enrollment in New Orleans by Race, October 2022



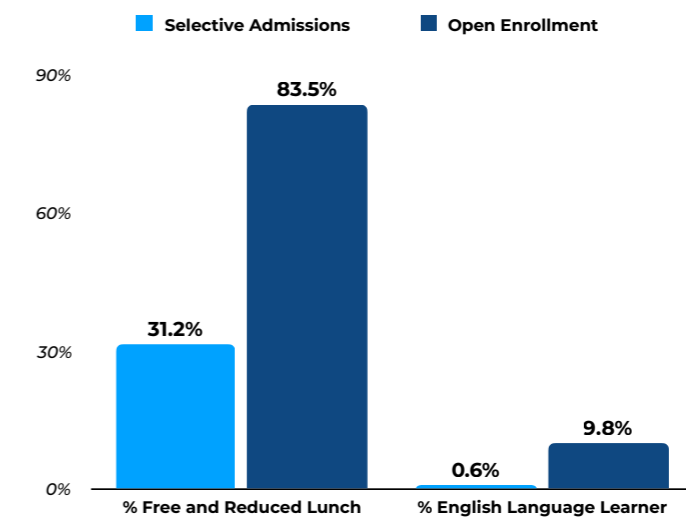
Student Demographics by Race Over Time: Louisiana vs. Orleans Parish



Student Demographics: Open Enrollment vs Selective Admission

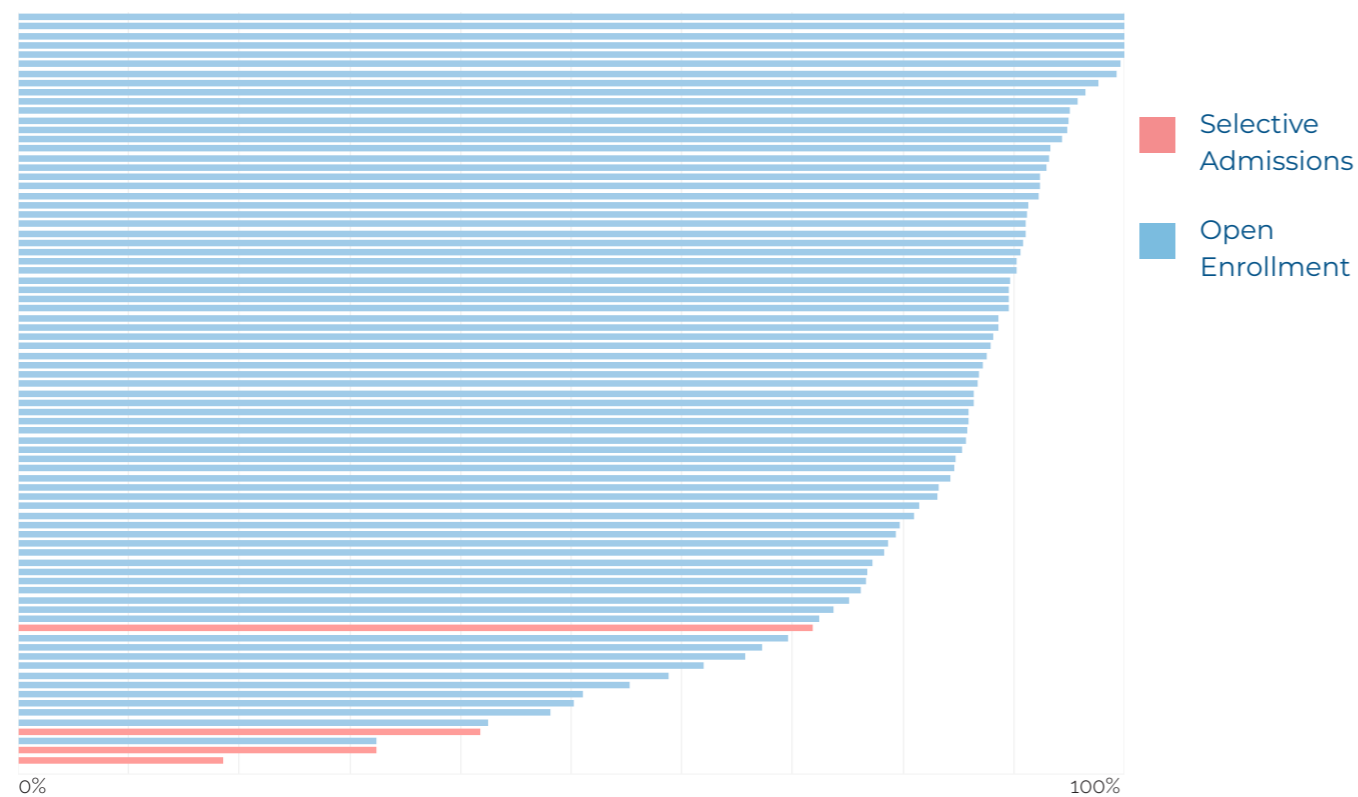


Student Populations: Open Enrollment vs Selective Admission

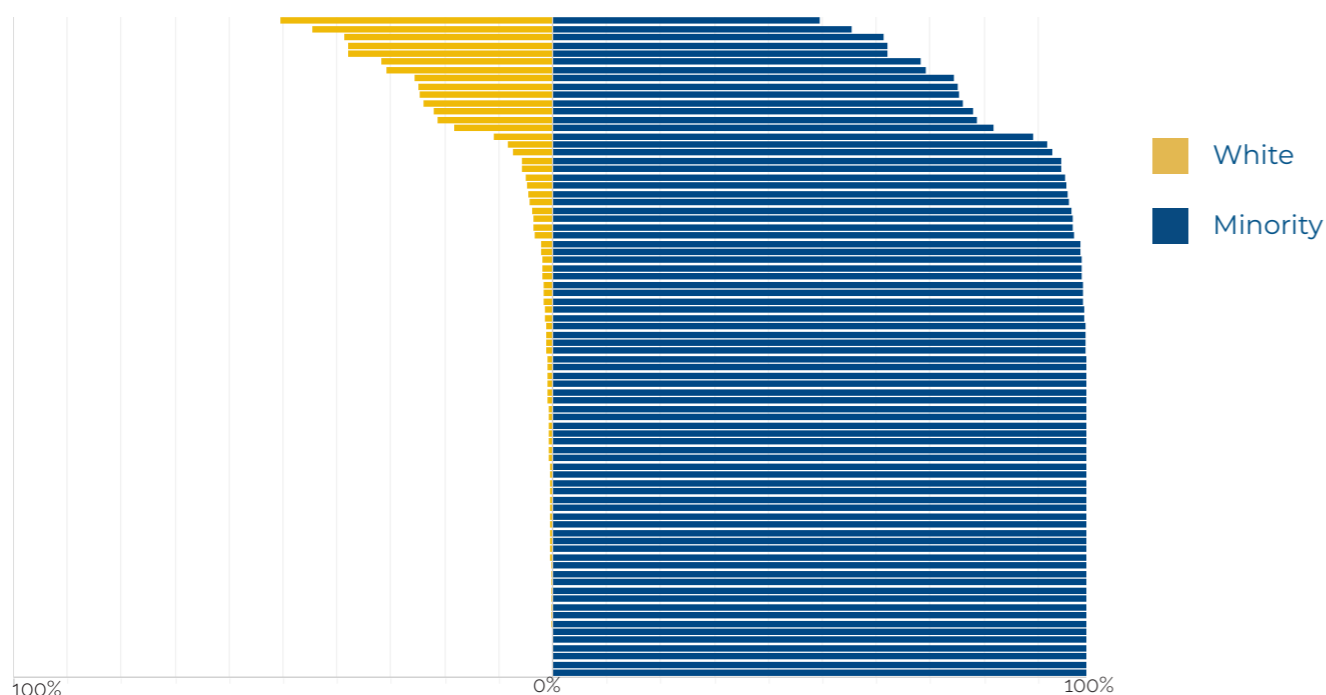


There are notable demographic differences in student body populations across public schools in New Orleans. The graphs below show that the majority of schools serve students from low-income households and minority students. White students and higher-income students are concentrated in a few schools in the city. These charts are meant to convey the concentration of White students in a relatively small number of schools. To see the data broken down by school in greater depth, visit cowendata.org.

Percentage of Students Who Qualify as Economically Disadvantaged by School in Orleans Parish (October 2022)



Percentage of White and Minority Students by School In Orleans Parish (October 2022)



Accountability

05

The word accountability is used frequently when talking about public schools, particularly since the federal adoption of No Child Left Behind legislation in 2001. But accountability has a very specific meaning with regard to public education in New Orleans and Louisiana. For public education in the state, accountability means the way that schools are held responsible for a number of student outcomes. On a national and a state level, schools are responsible for making sure that their students achieve a set of predefined standards.

Another commonly used phrase when talking about accountability is school performance. Schools are held accountable based on their performance.

How are public schools held accountable?

In Louisiana, schools are held accountable through a scoring system known as school performance scores (SPS). A school's SPS is calculated using a number of factors and the formula varies between elementary, middle, high, and combination schools. All schools are assessed along the lines of academic achievement (how many students achieve a certain score on an end-of-year-standardized test) and academic growth (how many students perform better on an end-of-year standardized test than expected).

Currently, schools are assessed on a 150-point scale and then assigned a letter grade from an A to an F based on their cumulative score. Assessment scores in grades 3-8 (students in grades K-2 are not tested) are based on student growth and proficiency levels on standardized tests, of which there are five: Advanced, Mastery, Basic, Approaching Basic, and Unsatisfactory.

The state shifted setting the bar for proficiency from an expectation of basic to mastery in 2015. In high school, all public school students take state level End-of-Course (EOC/LEAP 2025) tests and the ACT. Levels of proficiency are divided among four bands (Excellent, Good, Fair, and Needs Improvement). High school scores also take into account student growth and graduation rates.

Accountability and the pandemic

Following the disruption caused by the pandemic, the LDOE, with approval from the U.S. Department of Education, decided to pause assigning school letter grades for the 2020-2021 and 2021-2022 school years. This was a common strategy in states across the country, with nearly every state agreeing to suspend the assignment of school performance scores temporarily. Instead, districts and school leaders were provided with estimated school performance scores so they could gauge where their students were in the immediate aftermath of the pandemic. In the simulated scoring system, 71% of districts and 70% of schools in Louisiana received a performance score lower than their 2018-19 score, the last time official scores and letter grades were issued. In Orleans Parish, the simulated score was four points lower than in 2019 (63.8 compared to 67.8).

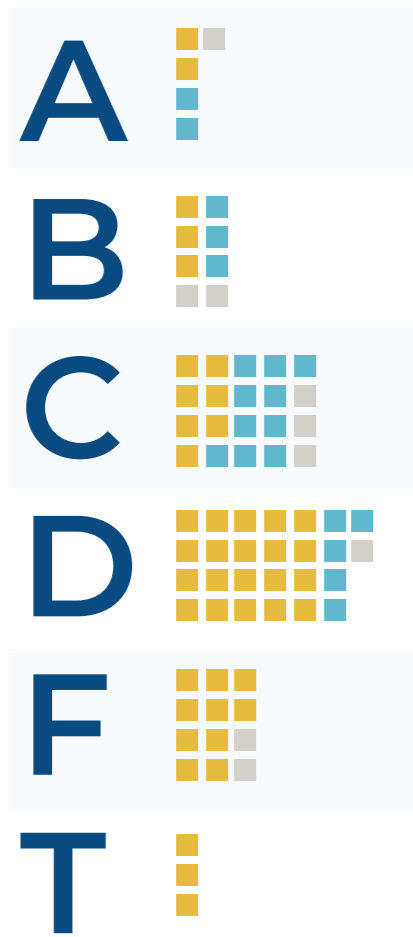
Proposed state-level standards

In summer 2022, the LDOE announced plans to modify existing accountability standards for high schools. Currently, approximately 70% of high schools in the state are A or B schools, compared with only 40% of elementary and middle schools. This is due to the varied weight of additional measures in high school accountability frameworks (such as graduation rates and the measure of graduation quality) compared to elementary and middle school frameworks, which rely mainly on standardized test scores and growth.

The Board of Elementary and Secondary Education voted against the proposed accountability changes in November 2022. Debates about changes will likely continue going forward. However, in 2022, the state did adopt its first accountability standards for grades K-2, which will begin to be implemented in the 2024-2025 school year.

Additionally, Superintendent Williams is currently working with NOLA-PS school leaders to update the Charter School Accountability Framework (CSAF) for the district to better reflect how schools are working with high numbers of economically disadvantaged students.

School Performance Scores in New Orleans (2022)



- Elementary School
- High School
- Combintation School

Since 1999, the state has issued School Performance Scores for public schools, which are based on student achievement data. To clearly communicate the quality of school performance to families and the public, Louisiana adopted letter grades (A-F).

T letter grade are given to schools rated F at the time of being taken over by another operator — they receive a turnaround letter grade for the following two years.

School Performance

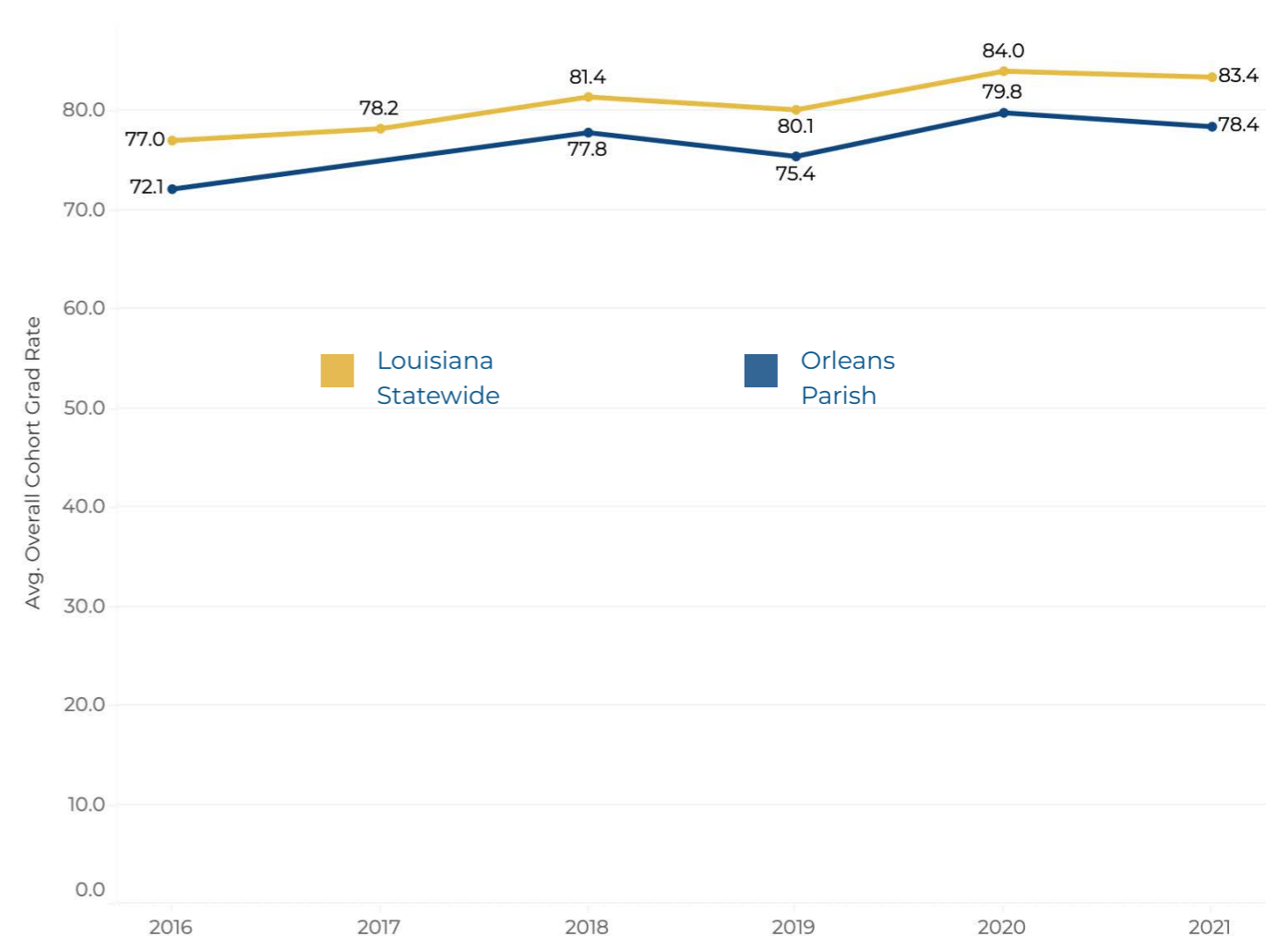
06

The LDOE uses many different indicators of school achievement to calculate a performance score or grade for all schools in Louisiana and Orleans Parish. Over the next several pages, we present graphs and data visualizations for many of these key measures of school performance including school letter grades, high school graduation rates, and ACT scores. As these graphs demonstrate, citywide high school graduation rates have increased overall since 2016, but stalled and then decreased recently. New Orleans' schools continue to lag behind the statewide

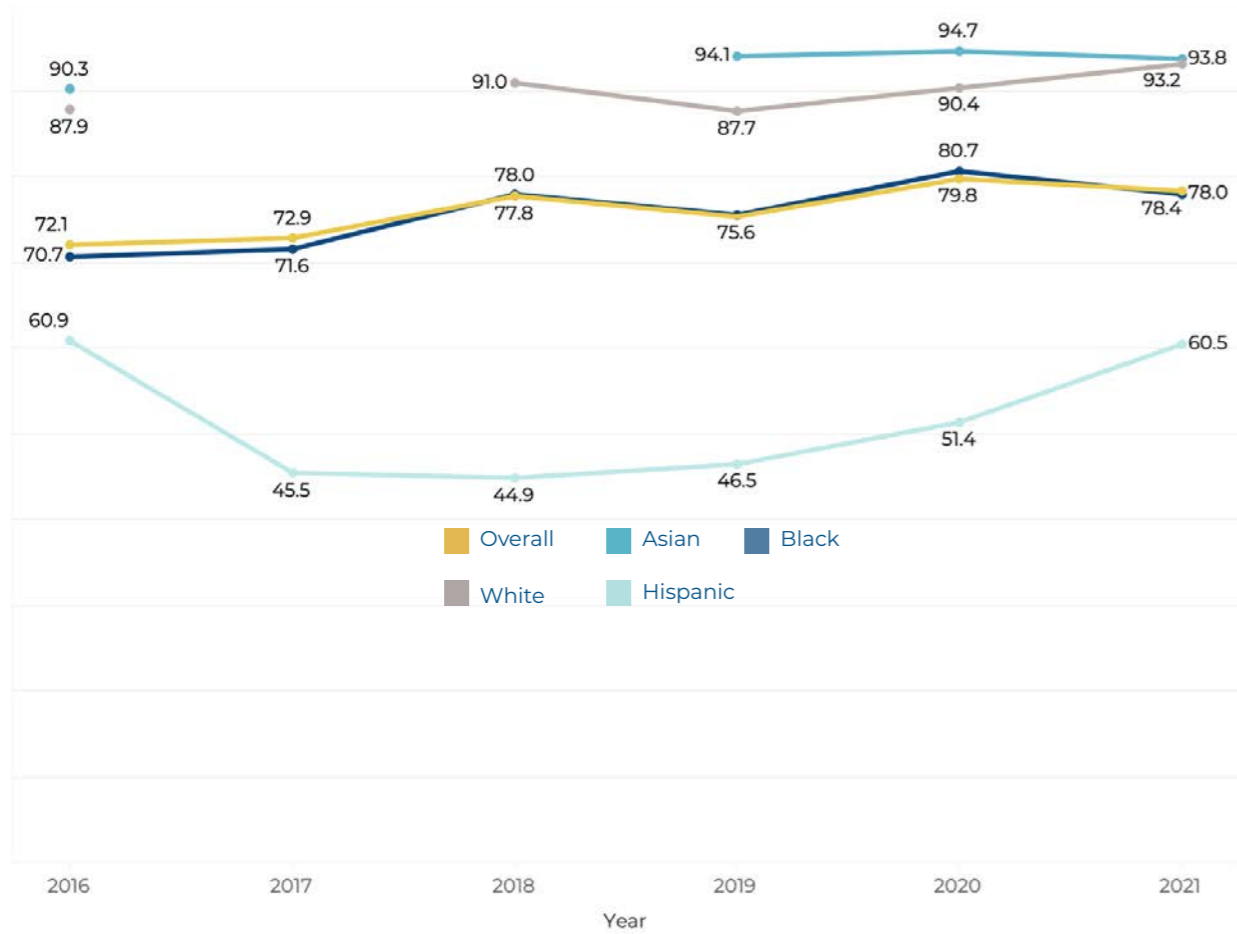
graduation rate and this gap is larger than it was five years ago. Graduation rates vary considerably along racial and subgroup lines.

Citywide ACT scores have improved over time but remain lower than the statewide average. ACT performance differs considerably from school to school, with selective admissions schools averaging between four and nine points higher than the citywide average.

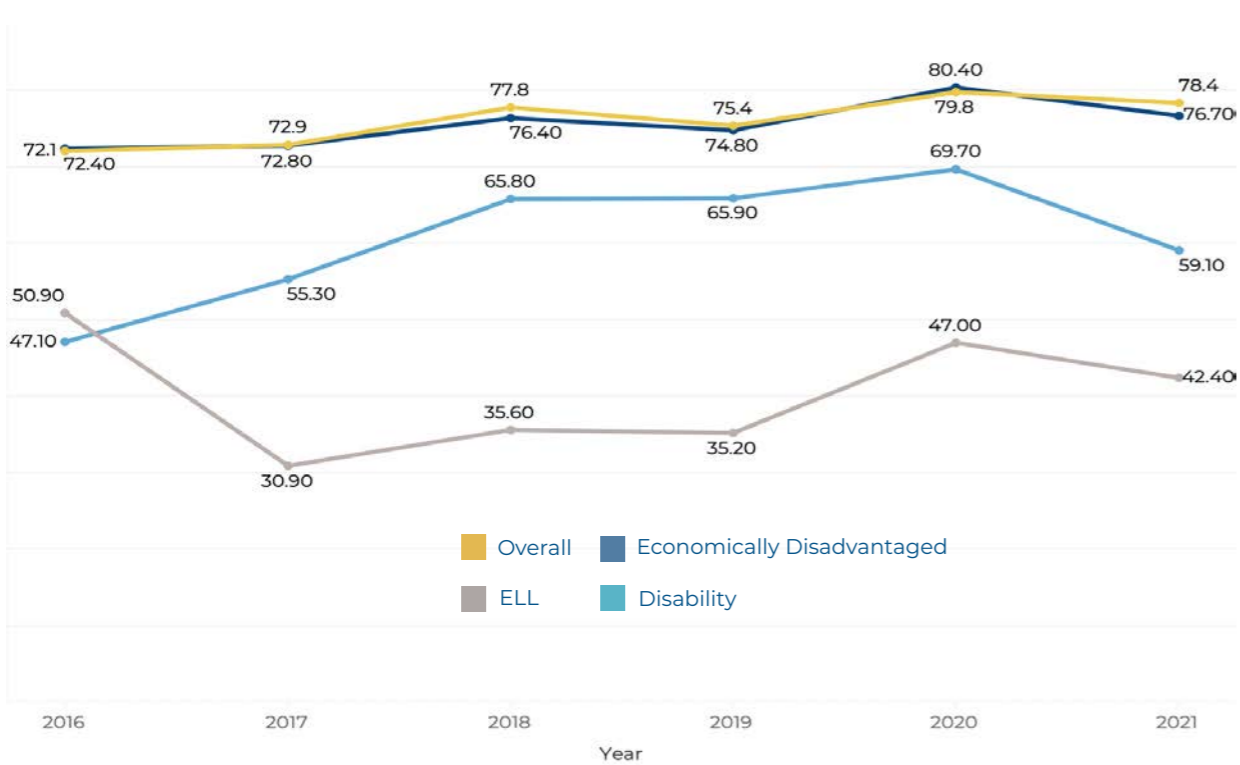
High School Graduation Rates Over Time, Orleans Parish and Louisiana



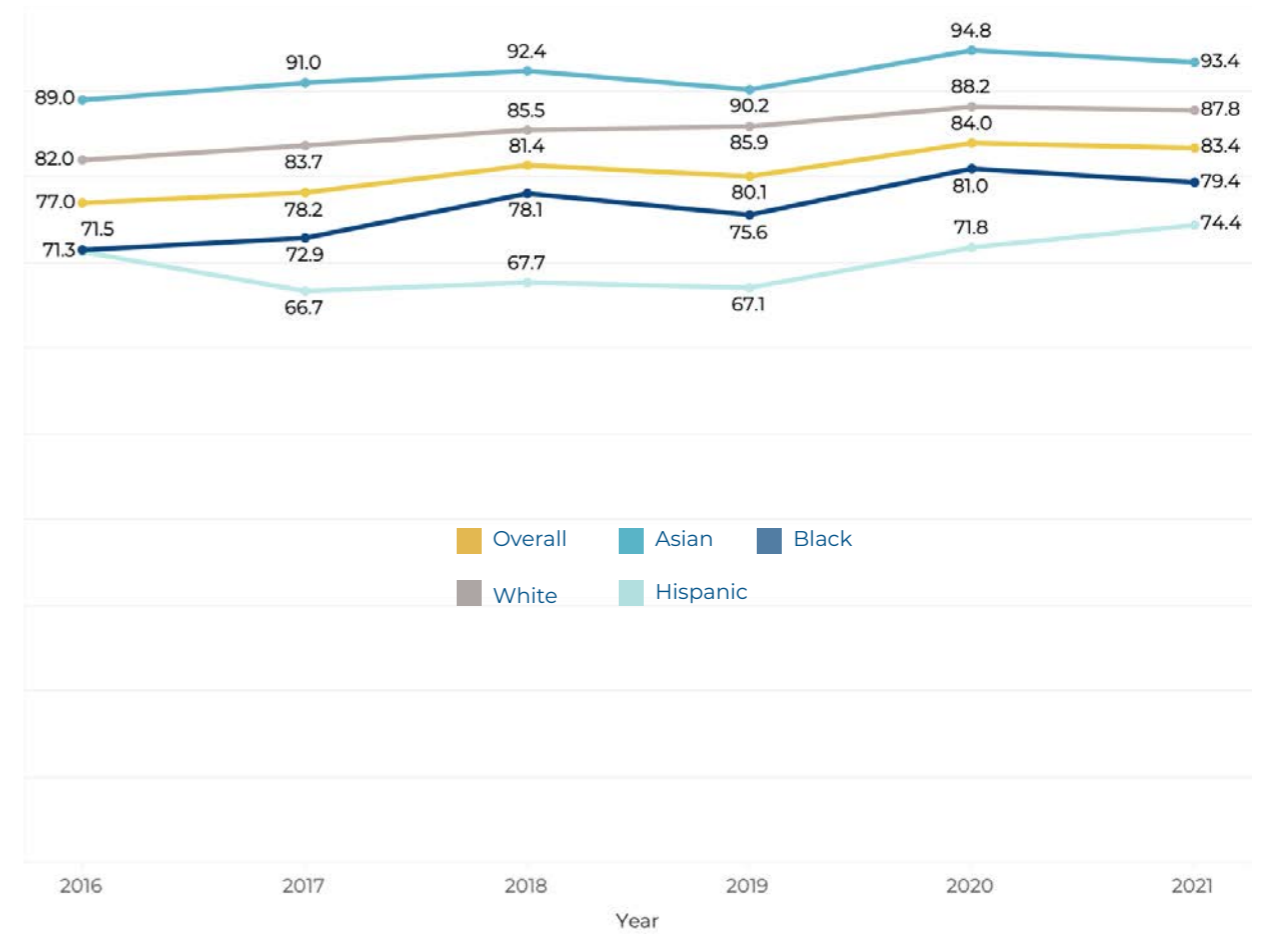
High School Graduation Rates by Race, Orleans Parish



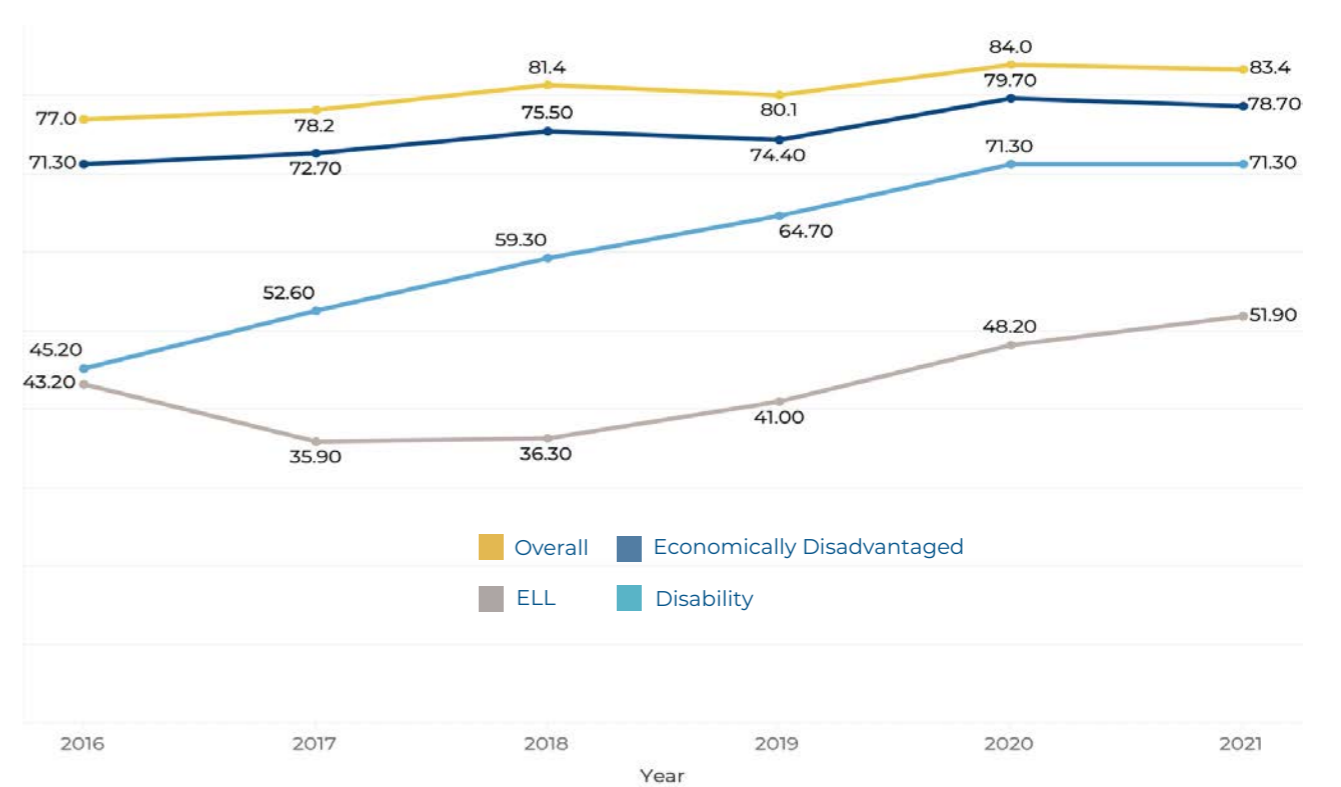
High School Graduation Rates by Subgroup, Orleans Parish



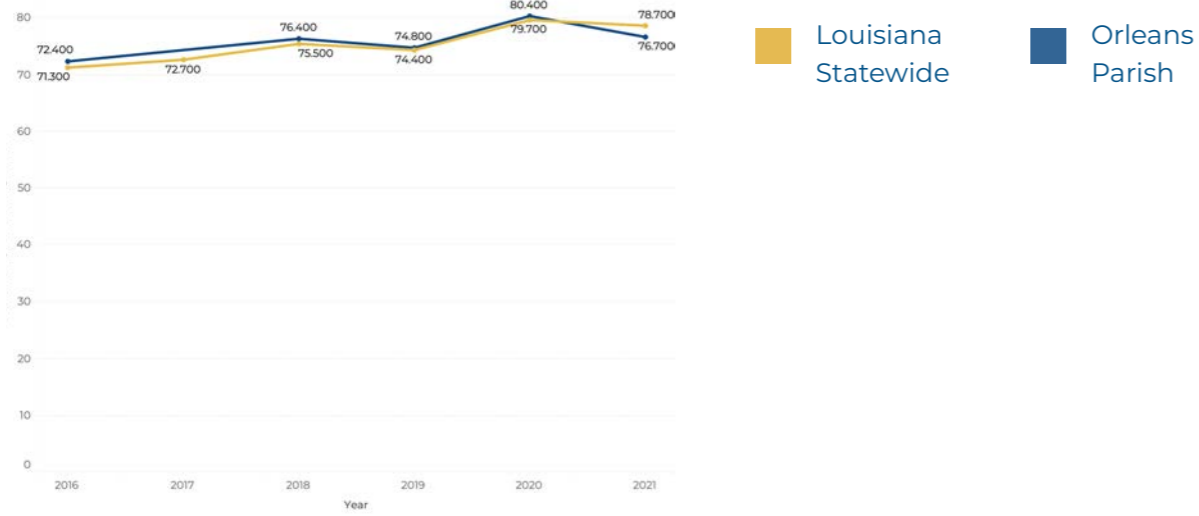
High School Graduation Rates by Race, Louisiana



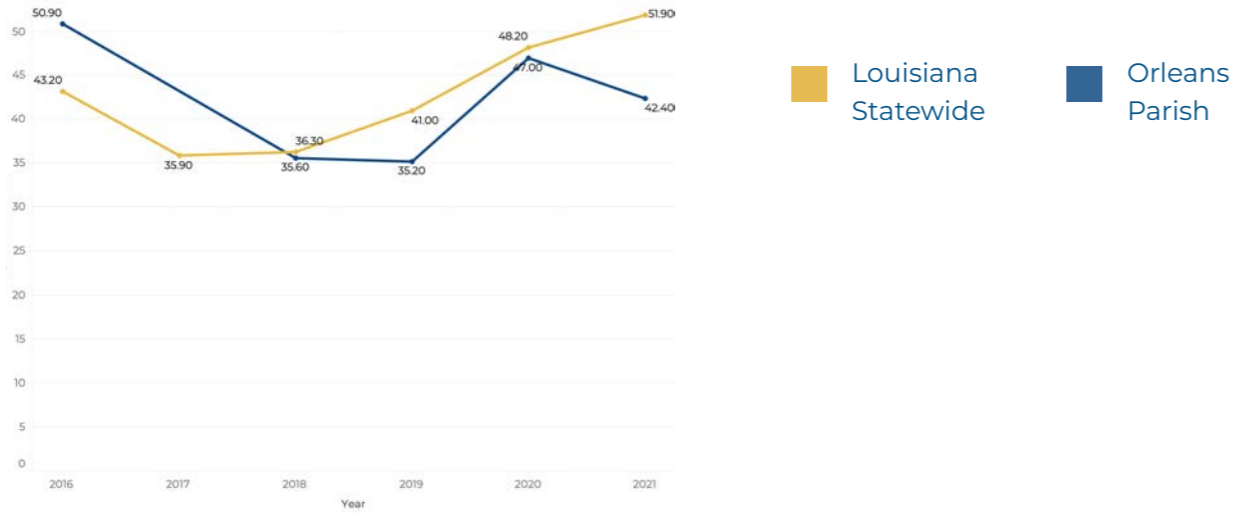
High School Graduation Rates by Subgroup, Louisiana



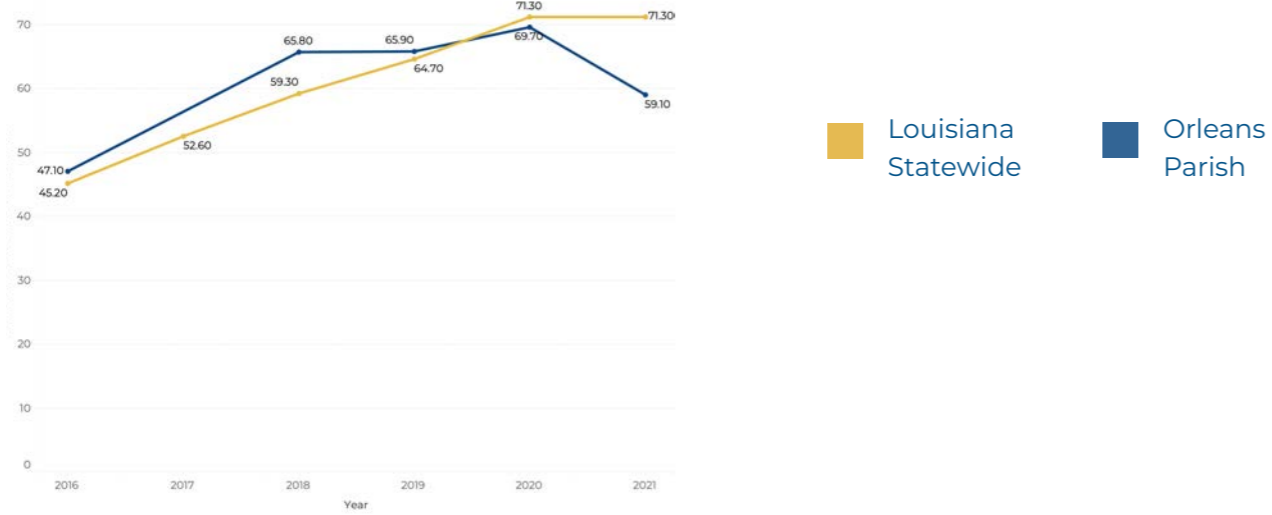
Graduation Rates for Economically Disadvantaged Students, Orleans Parish and Louisiana



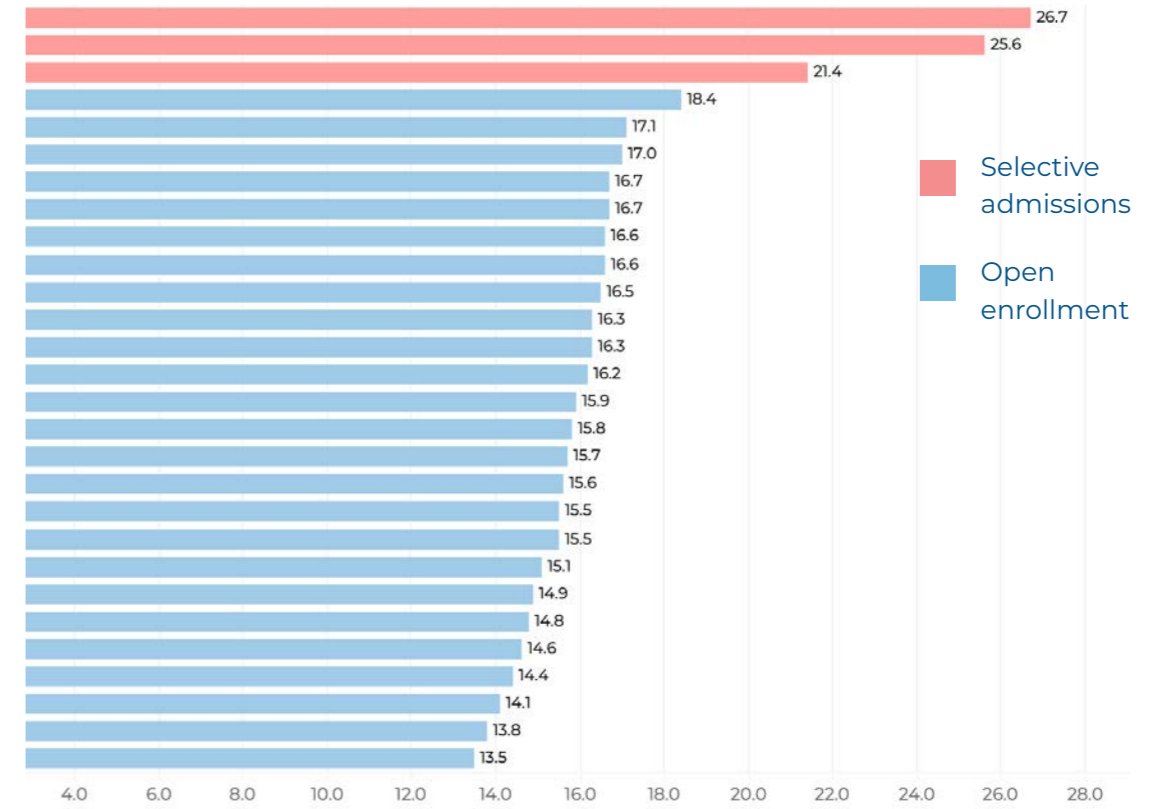
Graduation Rates for English Language Learners, Orleans Parish and Louisiana



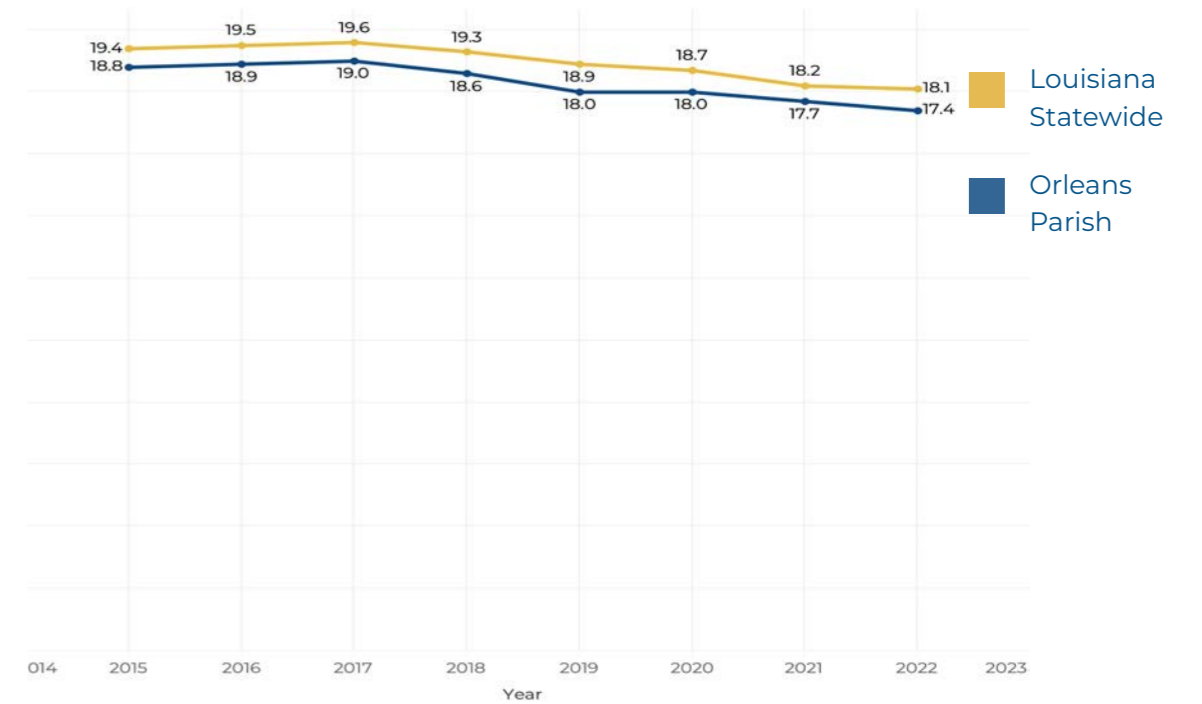
Graduation Rates for Special Education Students, Orleans Parish and Louisiana



Average ACT Composite Score by School in Orleans Parish (Spring 2021-2022)



Average ACT Composite Score - Orleans Parish and Louisiana (Spring 2021-2022)



Postsecondary

07

Over the past decade, there has been an increasing interest in data on postsecondary outcomes among New Orleans public high school students. Given the uniqueness of New Orleans public schools' governance model, New Orleans schools' measurable outcomes are closely watched by education reformers, policymakers, researchers, and community advocates. Academic performance and high school graduation rates in New Orleans saw an increase over the past decade but have stagnated in recent years. The 2020 cohort graduation rate for public school students in the city was nearly 80%, with a growth rate of 2.0% from 2011-12 to 2019-2020. This is below the average cohort graduation rate for the state of Louisiana (84%), as well as the statewide growth rate (12%). A similar trend has been seen with ACT scores.

College enrollment among students from New Orleans public high schools has increased over time. However, in 2020, there was a drop in college enrollment among New Orleans public high school students for the first time in recent years. In 2020, an estimated 57% of New Orleans public high school students enrolled in college, a 4% drop from 2019. However, college enrollment among Orleans Parish public high school graduates remained slightly higher than the statewide college enrollment rate of 54%. The Covid pandemic likely contributed to this drop.

While there appears to be a trend of increased college enrollment across the city, differences exist along racial and socioeconomic lines. As of 202, while 77% of White public school students enrolled in postsecondary education after high school graduation, 56% of Black public school students did the same. As with previous data, this varied greatly by school.

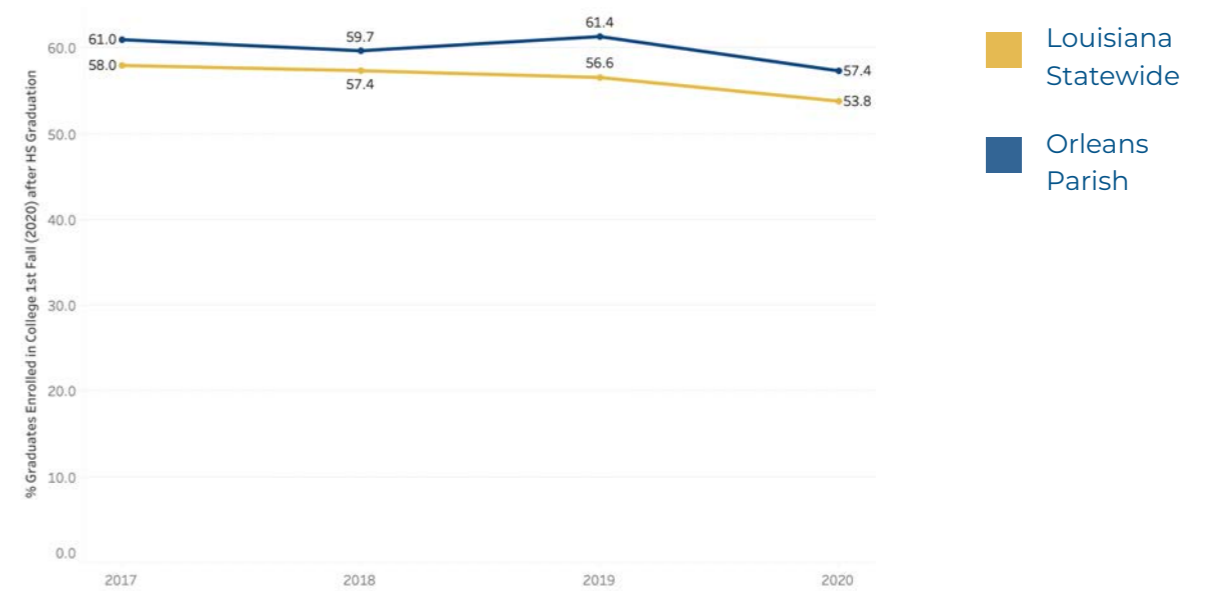
The vast majority of New Orleans' college-goers attend schools in the state (77%). Most of these students stay in New Orleans. Among recent New Orleans high school

students who enrolled in college, the largest percentage enrolled in Delgado Community College (22%), followed by University of New Orleans (12%), Southern University New Orleans (11%), and Xavier University (9%). Combined with students who enrolled in Dillard (6%), Loyola (3%), and Tulane (2%), nearly two-thirds (65% overall) of recent New Orleans public high school graduates enrolled in colleges in the city. Of the 23% of public high school graduates who enrolled in colleges out of state, the largest percentage attend schools in the neighboring states of Mississippi (18%) and Texas (16%).

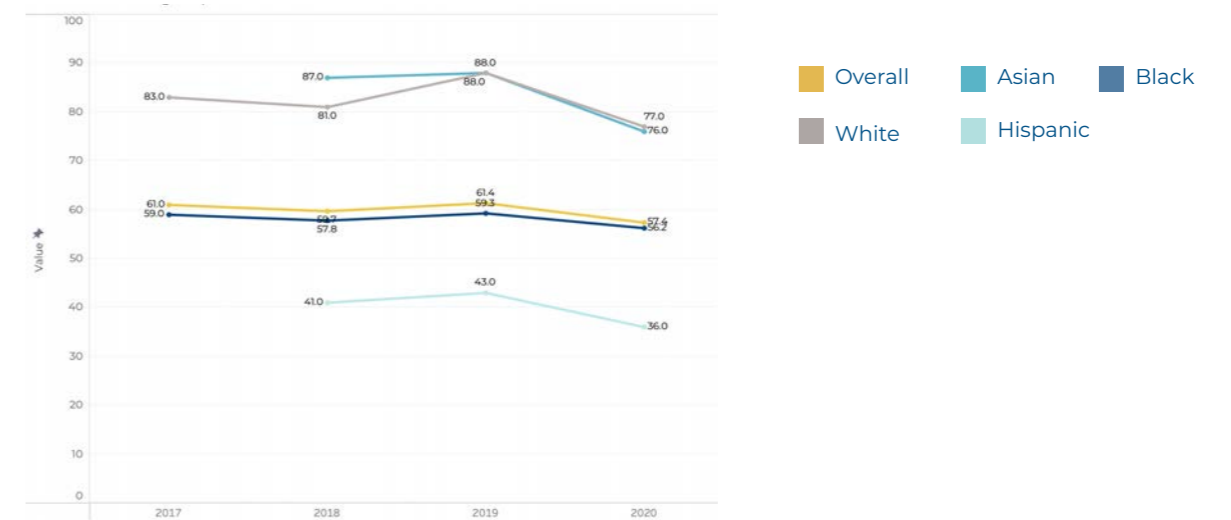
College Persistence

Mirroring national trends, New Orleans data reveals inequities in college persistence rates along the lines of race and socioeconomic status. Of the graduating high school class of 2019, 61.4% of New Orleans public school graduates enrolled in college the fall after their senior year, which was slightly higher than the state average of 56.6%. Of that initial cohort of college-goers from New Orleans public schools, 65.4% remained enrolled in college in the fall of 2020. This is a notable drop in the persistence rate among New Orleans public high school graduates — down over 7% from 2018 — and reflects the challenges that many young people faced when pursuing postsecondary education during the pandemic. As we've seen nationally, the second year re-enrollment rate varied dramatically along the lines of race: 90% of White students returned to college in the fall of their second year, compared to 61% of Black students. More than 40% of economically disadvantaged students and 56.1% of students with a special education designation did not return to college in the fall the year after enrolling. Among all three populations (students from low-income backgrounds, special education students, and Black students), New Orleans youth persisted at a lower rate than comparable groups at the state and national levels.

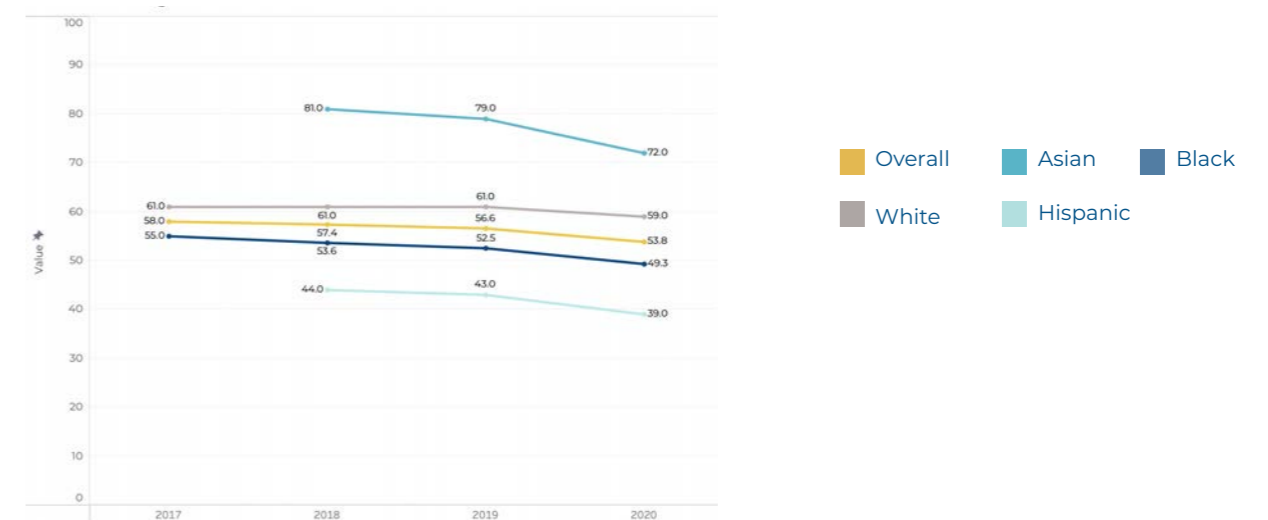
College Enrollment Rates Over Time



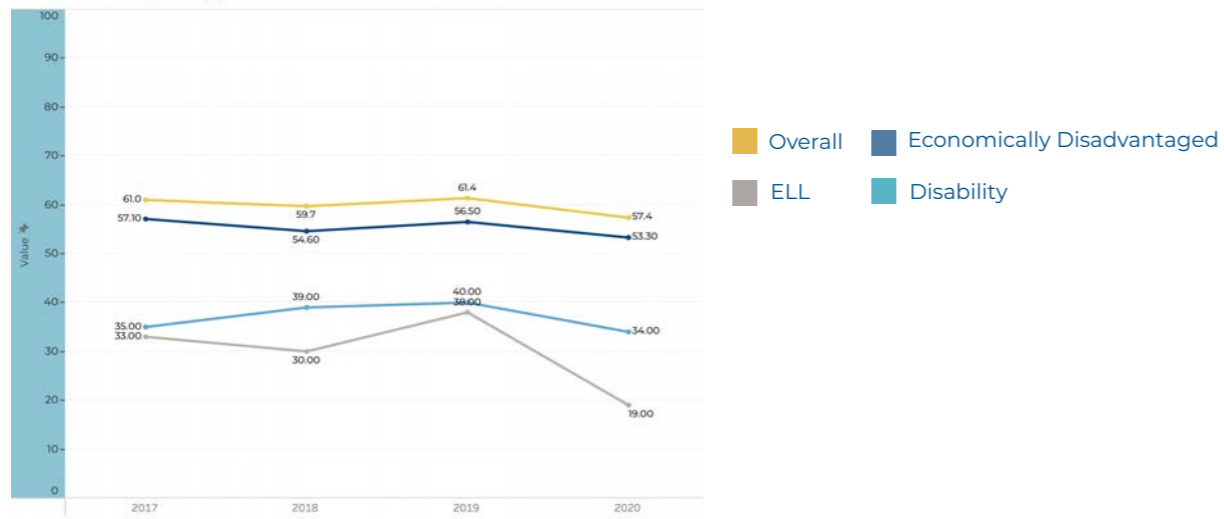
College Enrollment Rates Over Time By Race, Orleans Parish



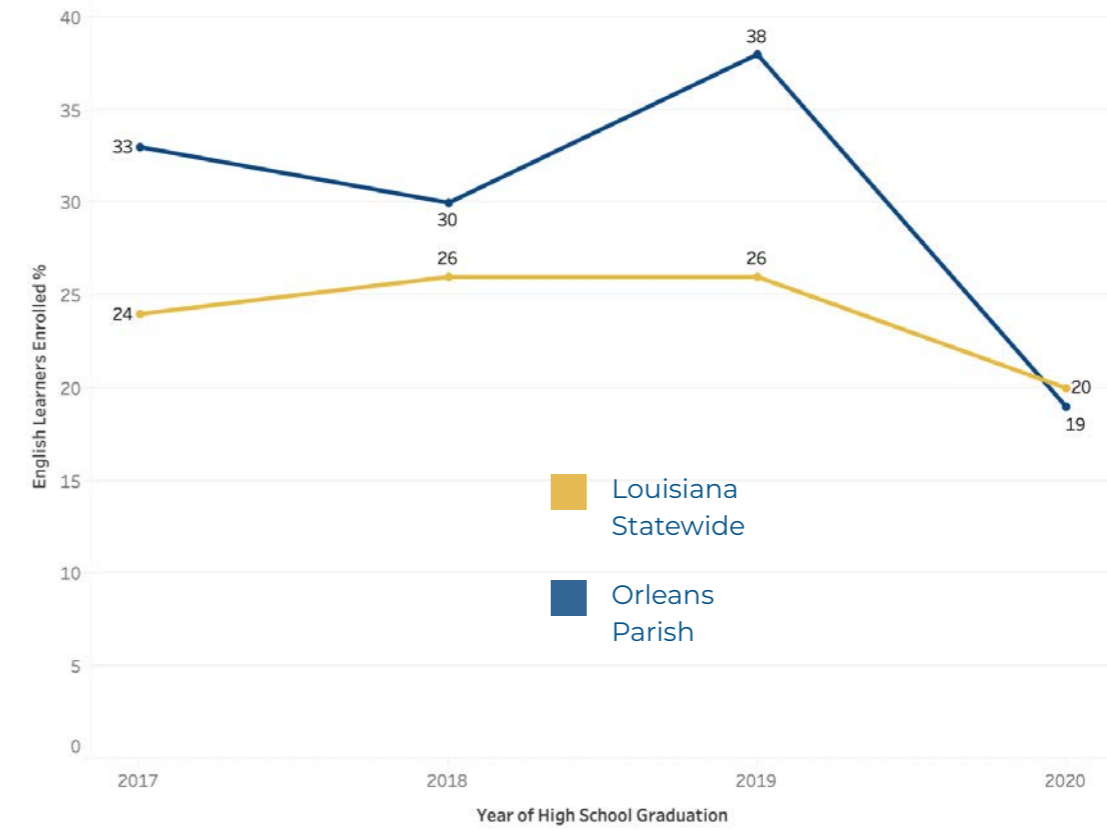
College Enrollment Rates Over Time By Race, Louisiana



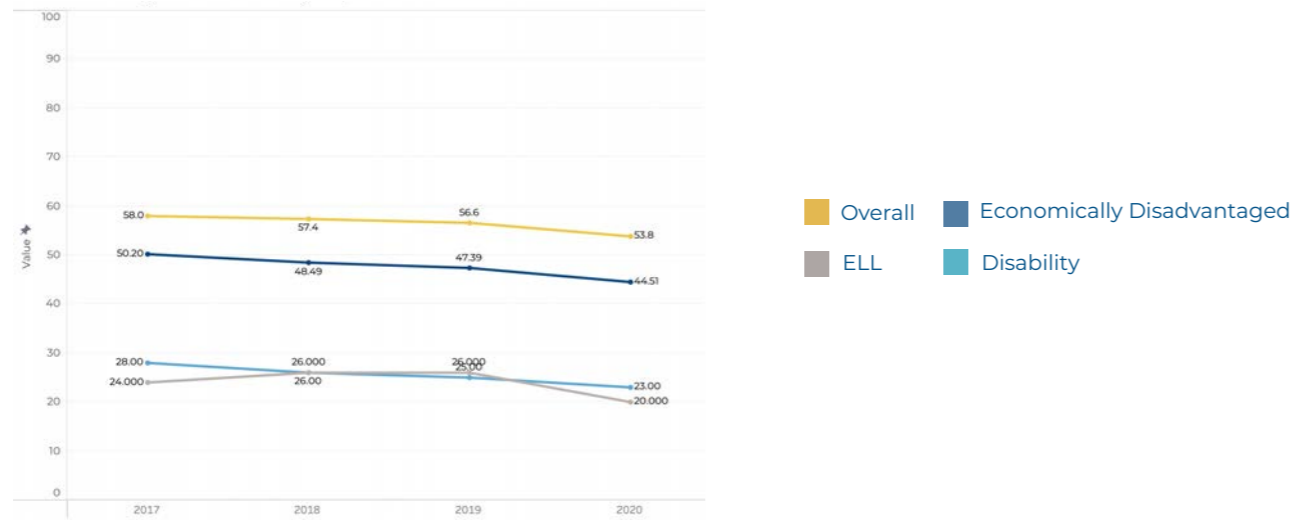
College Enrollment Rates Over Time By Subgroup, Orleans Parish



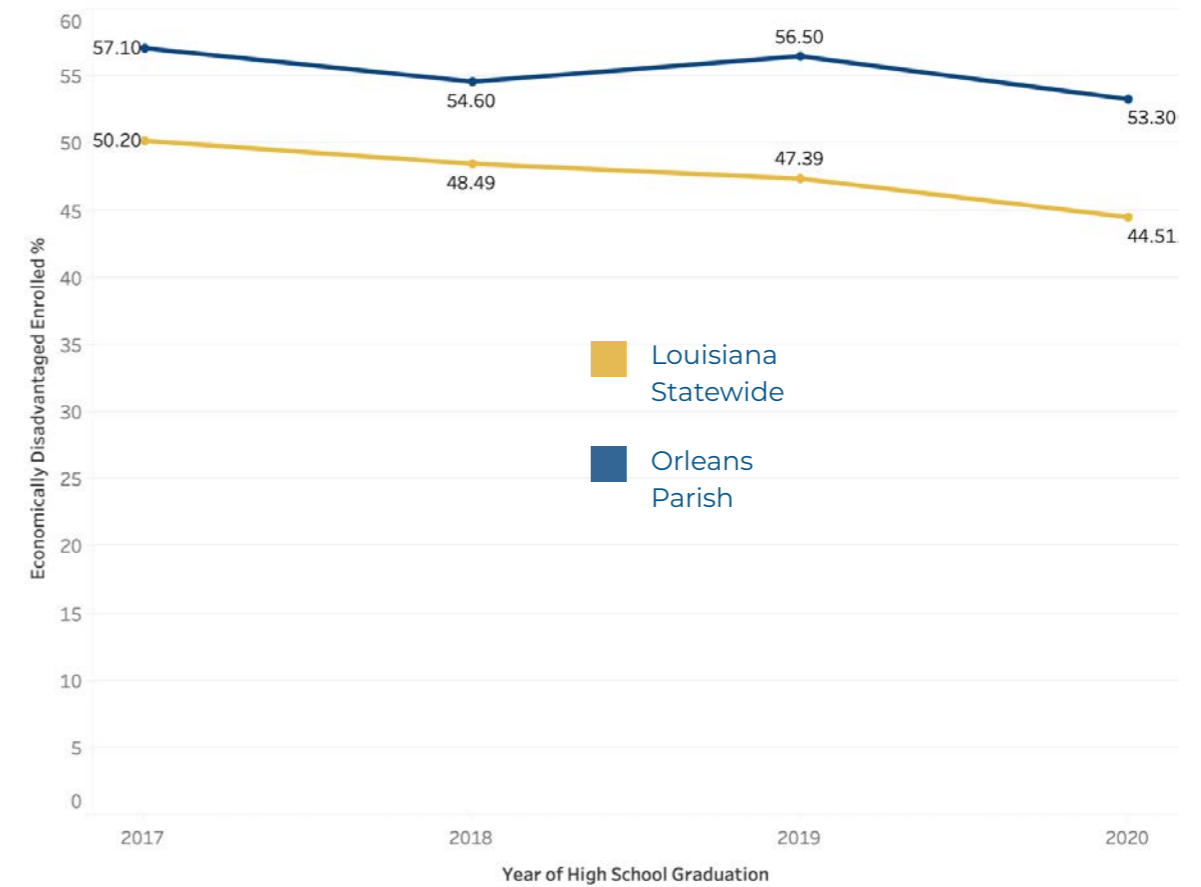
College Enrollment Rates Over Time For English Language Learners, Orleans and Louisiana



College Enrollment Rates Over Time By Subgroup, Louisiana



College Enrollment Rates Over Time For Economically Disadvantaged Students, Orleans and Louisiana



Looking Forward

08

Traditionally, the Cowen Institute has concluded SPENO each year with a section that looks ahead to what is on the horizon for New Orleans education over the next year. This year, we wanted to highlight some of the major issues we are tracking for the city's K-12 public education landscape here, but save a deeper analysis of these topics for a subsequent publication.

During the spring of 2023, we plan to release a brief that contains interviews with education officials, charter and non-profit leaders, and public stakeholders that provide their perspectives on the most important issues facing the city's education system. As we remain committed to providing non-partisan, objective analysis of New Orleans public education, we believe that letting policy- and decision-makers speak directly for themselves is the best way to inform the public about crucial matters in education in the city going forward.

Those interviews will include questions on issues we are monitoring, including:

- **Enrollment:** The projected continued drop in public school enrollment could significantly impact the financial viability of many schools in the city. Ensuring that there are the right number of schools for the number of students will be a major priority for policymakers and school leaders in the near- and long-term. The district will likely have to optimize the number of schools in the city to align with declining student enrollment numbers.
- **Finances:** During the Covid pandemic, the federal government stepped in to provide an unprecedented level of funding to K-12 districts across the country. These ESSER funds (named after the legislation that authorized their use) will end in the next few years. Districts, including New Orleans, have relied on these

funds to balance their budget and provide necessary services to students since 2021. Once these funds are no longer available, districts will have to find other sources of revenue to balance their budgets. In New Orleans, that means both CMOs and NOLA-PS will have to plan for what the loss of these funds mean for the way they allocate resources to students.

- **Accountability:** As mentioned earlier in the accountability section of this report, there are a number of both adopted and proposed changes that are likely to impact the way schools are assessed and held accountable in Louisiana as a whole, and New Orleans specifically over the coming years. This includes the removal of a letter grade curve for schools. The goal of this change is to toughen the standards by which the state assesses public schools. Getting rid of this curve will likely lower the performance grades of some schools in New Orleans. Additionally, the LDOE and BESE are also considering a number of changes to how accountability measures are calculated for K-2, academic growth, and high schools. Additionally, as mentioned earlier, NOLA-PS and charter leaders are considering changes to the CSAF standards in the city.

As always, we thank you for reading the work of the Cowen Institute and we welcome you to explore more of our publications or reach out to us at:

coweninstitute.org

To view and interact with the data used for all the graphs and charts in this report, visit:

cowendata.org

Notes & Sources

09

Note on data on teachers and transportation: In previous editions of SPENO, we have included data on teachers (such as average salaries and experience) and transportation (such as the amount schools are paying for transportation compared to schools in the rest of the state). However, the LDOE has not updated that data and made it publicly available since the publication of the previous version of SPENO. Therefore, we opted not to just reprint that same data in this report. Therefore, this edition does not include sections on either topic.

Endnotes:

- 1 <https://coweninstitute.medium.com/>
- 2 <https://www.coweninstitute.org/resources-H3B0W/poll-2021-1>
- 3 https://nolapublicschools.com/about/superintendent#:~:text=avis_williams%40nolapublicschools.com,permanently%20appointed%20to%20this%20role.
- 4 <https://www.wwno.org/education/2022-07-12/avis-williams-begins-tenure-as-nola-ps-superintendent-shares-plan-for-first-100-days>
- 5 Same as above
- 6 https://www.nola.com/news/education/article_78df1540-015d-11ed-bde6-dfb3045077a9.html
- 7 <https://www.wdsu.com/article/nola-public-schools-final-list-renaming-proposal-new-orleans/36672270>
- 8 <https://thelensnola.org/2022/04/30/new-orleans-voters-approve-early-childhood-education-tax/>



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*We would like to thank Entergy New Orleans
for their continued support of the **The State of
Public Education in New Orleans** report.*



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